
EZEKIEL'S WARNING
APPLIED TO THE
THREATENED INVASION
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.

A
S E R M O N.

By N. NISBETT, M.A.



EZEKIEL'S WARNING
TO THE JEWS,

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APPLIED TO THE

THREATENED INVASION

OF

GREAT BRITAIN.

A

S E R M O N,

DELIVERED

AT

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MARCH the 8th, 1797.

By N. NISBETT, M. A.

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EXHIBIT. WARNING

TO THE JEWS

ATTENTION TO THE

THE EASTERN INVASION

OF GREAT BRITAIN

J. B. R. M. O. N.

1841



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EZEKIEL xxxiii. ver. 2, 3, 4, and 5.

Son of Man speak to the Children of thy people, and say to them, when I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts and set him for their watchman, if when he seeth the sword coming upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people, then whosoever beareth the sound of the trumpet and taketh not warning; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head: he heard the sound of the trumpet and took not warning: his blood shall be upon him: But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.

THERE will not, I apprehend, be two opinions what ought to be the principal object of a Christian preacher, on an occasion like the present. The very nature of a fast

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includes in it, humiliation before God, for the manifold sins of our past lives ; a deep sense of our absolute dependance upon him and the offering up of our most fervent, but submissive prayers, that the calamities of War may be put an end to, and the inestimable blessings of peace be restored to us. These, I say, are the principal ends of meetings like the present—but they are not the only ones. There are other objects to be attended to, secondary indeed and inferior, but equally necessary, and perfectly consistent with these, namely, the using our utmost endeavours in opposing the designs of our enemies, and the defending ourselves against their attempts to invade us, by every method consistent with the laws of war ; that such an equitable peace may be obtained, as may lay a solid foundation for the future quiet and tranquillity of the European world.

These important objects are clearly pointed out to us in the chapter before us—the latter in the words now read to you—the former in a considerable proportion of the remainder of the chapter, and I shall treat of them in the

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order pointed out by the Prophet. And in the 1st place I am to point out the necessity of making every possible exertion to oppose the designs of our enemies to invade our country, and the using every method, which is consistent with the laws of war, of obliging them to put an end to the farther effusion of human blood.

War is a calamity which is, perhaps, the severest of any with which the sons of men are afflicted. It is big with evils which the most lively imagination is unable to paint, in colours sufficiently strong. It is a calamity which no humane and benevolent man can think of, without feeling the most painful emotions whenever a necessity arises of having recourse to it. But great as this calamity is, and dreadful as its effects may be—the experience of all ages has shown, I do not say that it is unavoidable, but that there hath ever been an unhappy propensity towards it among mankind. There is no period of history—no age or country which have not exhibited the melancholy ef-

fects of the pride, the ambition, or the avarice of mankind ; which are justly allowed to be the principal causes of war.

But although this is a melancholy fact—yet that there are justifiable causes of war, there is no one, I think, who will have the hardiness to deny. That neither the law of nature nor the precepts of Christianity restrain us from defending ourselves from the encroachments of a neighbouring state, is as plain as that my next door neighbour has no right to come into my house and satiate his avarice, or any other malevolent passion, at my expence. The fact is—there are rights belonging to states, as well as to individuals, which are sacred, and which cannot be violated without incurring the charge of injustice, and the obligation of making reparation : and if that reparation is refused—in after every possible endeavour, of the injured party, to obtain that reparation, by mild and peaceable methods, an hostile disposition manifestly prevalent, I know of no method

but an appeal to the sword, dreadful as it is, to compel it to act as becomes a state*.

It is foreign to my intention to enter largely into the causes which have led to the unhappy contest in which we are at present engaged—much less is it my design to examine into the measures of the government of this country, either in the commencement, or in the progress of the war. Such an arduous undertaking, is far beyond my limited abilities and my imperfect information: besides, that a place of worship would not be the most proper one for such a discussion. One fact, however, with which we are all acquainted, deserves to be mentioned, as amounting, at least, in my estimation, to a decisive proof, that we were not eager to engage in the quarrel; namely,

* I know of no work in which there are to be found more excellent sentiments on the subject of war, than in one of our school-books written by the immortal Fenelon. No where is there expressed a stronger detestation of, or a greater antipathy to it, but in cases of extreme necessity. Yet that necessity he describes in strong terms in the case of the impious Adrastus!

that for a considerable length of time, we were silent (though not indifferent) spectators of the events which were then passing in France, and that it was not till a most daring attack was made upon the territories of one of our allies, the nearest to us in point of situation, that we were roused to take a share in the troubles of the times. Such an attack could not be a matter of indifference to us—and it was impossible for the French Government not to see that it was directly calculated to rouse the jealousy of this country. This circumstance alone is a strong presumption of the real designs of our enemies! Whether therefore we could quietly suffer such an intrusion, with any safety to ourselves, and whether the pretext of giving liberty to others*, will be sufficient to exculpate

* It will, I think, be acknowledged that it was the most extravagant folly in the French nation, to become the champions of the liberties of other nations before they had secured their own. But to this imprudent zeal, or to speak more properly, to this wild ambition, has been owing, I am afraid, all the subsequent evils which have desolated Europe and endangered, in an high degree, those liberties for which they themselves have been contending. The Revolution of France, I allow, had great difficulties to encounter and many enemies to contend with. It was

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the French nation from harbouring views of ambition dangerous to that safety, I shall leave to every one to determine for himself.

But whatever idea may be formed of the origin of the war, there is one circumstance which must not be forgotten—a circumstance, concerning which, there can scarcely be two opinions—a circumstance which, in my opinion, does the highest credit to the government of this country, and which I wish, strongly, to impress upon your minds as of the greatest importance, in the present critical state of things! The circumstance which I

impossible it should be otherwise: but it may fairly be questioned whether a surer method of defeating their own purposes, could have been adopted. Oh, how much to be lamented is it that an event, which promised so much benefit to mankind, should have been productive of so much misery! A better reason for this sad issue of things cannot, perhaps, be given, than in the words of the author of our religion—*How can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit?* Agreeable to this doctrine of our Saviour, a very excellent writer observes, that liberty requires justice, moderation and humanity, without which, it is the opening of the gates of a prison to a band of ruffians, who spread desolation and horror around them; and how destitute the French nation hath been of these virtues, let any man judge for himself!

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allude to, is, the anxious wish that hath been displayed on our part, to put an end to the horrors of War, and to obtain the blessings of Peace. We have not waited for overtures of peace from the enemy, but have laid aside all forms, which might, in the remotest degree, impede negotiation—We have sought for this inestimable blessing, by every means that could be devised. We have not only proposed terms ourselves, which had for their object, the future tranquility of Europe, without any selfish considerations, or individual national aggrandisement—we have done more—We have, in the strongest terms, expressed our repeated wishes, that our enemies would make some proposals of their own, which might lead to an amicable accommodation. All this we have done with every appearance of sincerity, and what hath been the result? Are there not the most striking appearances, that the same ambition that marked their first inroads into the territories of our allies, still continues to actuate their conduct, and that their resolution of retaining conquests, which would subject
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half Europe to their mercy, have completely barred up the avenues to peace, and left us no alternative—no means of avoiding the continuation of the miseries of war? To add to our calamities—that war which has hitherto been carried on, at a distance, and of which we have scarcely any other idea, than from the expences which it has occasioned—that war, I say, is threatened to be brought to our own doors, and we are taught to expect, a most inveterate and enraged foe to disturb our internal tranquility, and, as far as they can, to render this country, like their own, a scene of blood and desolation, of wretchedness and misery which no words can describe.

Thus, to use the language of our text—the trumpet is blown, and warning is given—therefore, whosoever, adds the Prophet, taketh not warning, that is, whosoever doth not provide against the danger that threatens him—whoever, in short, doth not use every degree of diligence, to be ready to repel the enemy, his blood shall not only be upon his own head—but, whatever miseries befall his family

family—his friends—his property—his country and every thing that is most dear in life, they are the fruits of his own folly—of his own negligence! He will deserve no pity, but be justly execrated by his fellow-countrymen, as the betrayer of the interests of the community, to which he belongs. On the contrary, he who takes warning—who willingly offers his services to assist his country, in this time of public danger, will not only stand the fairest chance of delivering his own soul, and whatever he has any value for, but will have the pleasing satisfaction of having contributed to the salvation of his country.

Can it now be a question which of these two characters we should wish, should we be called to it, to sustain in the day of trial? Is there any thing in the comparison of the conduct of the two nations, which can lead us to hesitate which party we shall support? The out-set of the revolution, in France, it is true, which hath unhappily led to the present disastrous state of the European world, was matter of joy and exultation to those who
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fondly imagined they saw in it, the dawn of happiness to myriads of beings, yet unborn. But, alas! How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed? How is Liberty degraded by the shameless ambition, by the cruel inhumanity, by the unbounded rapacity which hath marked the steps of its votaries? How is even Religion itself, that source of consolation under all the troubles and calamities of life, and the true friend of liberty, when rightly understood—how, I say, is Religion vilified and trampled under foot, by those champions of liberty! I say not, but that the time may come, when juster notions*, and better practices may succeed to these dreadful disorders! Such a change, I am sure, is most devoutly to be wished, by every man who is a friend to humanity, a friend to peace,

* It would be doing great injustice to the French revolution, to attribute to it, the infidelity, which has been so notorious in the conductors of it. It is an observation commonly made, that men do not become abandoned, but by degrees, and this observation is, I conceive, applicable to the present state of infidelity in France. It had its origin under the antient monarchy, and it has been allowed,

or a friend to order and civilization ! But, till then, no sober, thinking person, living, as we do, under the best government in Europe, and perhaps in the world, can entertain the most distant idea of wishing success to our enemies, much less of aiding and assisting them ! Whatever dissatisfaction he may have, on account of any imperfections, real or supposed, in the government of this country, they will, I am persuaded, be all lost, in the apprehension of evils, infinitely more to be dreaded, in the anarchy and licentiousness, in the desolation and the accumulated miseries which would

allowed, by very able writers of opposite sentiments, both in politics and religion, that infidelity had made an alarming progress among the higher ranks of society : nor was it difficult to foresee that, in the moment of revolution, no distinction would be made between the use and the abuse of religion. Unhappily, instead of the reformation of the church, its destruction was accomplished ; instead of lopping off the branches, which by length of time had been decayed, the tree itself, which might have obtained renewed vigour, was cut down. The consequences were such as might have been expected.—When the banks were broken down, which preserved the little remains of Virtue—Iniquity broke in like a flood and spread desolation all around !

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infallibly mark their progress! Indeed so clear is this case, that I can scarcely imagine there is a man in this country, who possesses the smallest regard for it, who would hesitate which cause he should espouse; that of France, or that of England!

We have, already, happily experienced the union and the firmness which an attempt to invade our sister kingdom has produced, and that under circumstances which might have led to a suspicion, that their protection, by our navy, was not sufficiently attended to*. And I cannot entertain a doubt but that the same spirit will animate all ranks of men, *among us*, and lead us to the most honourable contention, who shall do most towards their country's preservation! As an excitement to this emulation, let us be strongly impressed by this important consideration, that the surest way to avoid the danger which threatens us, is, to be prepared

* To those who entertain any suspicion of neglect, on the part of Government, upon that occasion, I would recommend the able defence of its conduct, by Mr. Dundas, in the House of Commons.

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against it. By this means, we may, through the divine blessing, deliver our country from the miseries inseparable from the neighbourhood of contending armies,—We may preserve our families from violation, and our property from depredation, and we shall show to the world at large, that we still deserve the high distinction, which has so long graced the name of Britons.

That this character of our countrymen is not extinguished, we have had numerous instances in the course of the present contest; but the instance of heroic bravery, which has just occurred, in a most unequal contest with a fleet, nearly double our own force, is scarcely to be paralleled in the annals of our country; and it cannot but strike every considerate person, with the deepest gratitude to the Great Disposer of all events, for so well timed an interruption to the designs of our enemies. But let not this, nor any successful event which we may be blessed with, have any tendency to slacken our diligence—but rather let them operate to stimulate us to more active exertions.

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and then, I trust, we shall finally triumph over all our enemies. Let no man think himself so insignificant, his station so humble, or his powers so limited, as not be able to do some good. Let every one have this idea constantly present with him, that the failure of his individual exertions may, in certain circumstances, be an essential injury to his country.

Thus much I have thought it my duty to say, upon the necessity of coming forward, upon the present important crisis—If it hath the happy effect of animating our courage and of warning us of our danger, in such a manner as to be prepared against it, I shall think my labour well bestowed. *He that taketh warning shall deliver his soul.*

But this reminds us of the other part of our subject, namely, the humbling ourselves before Almighty God, and the reforming what is wrong in us, that we may avert the Divine displeasure. The prophet makes a transition from the warning to be prepared against the dangers, which the bringing a sword upon a land would introduce, to a warning to repentance—to an

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application to Him who is the arbiter of the fates of nations, *who sets up one kingdom and pulls down another, and who does whatsoever pleases him, in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.* v. 7. *Son of Man, I have set thee a watchman unto the House of Israel—therefore thou shalt bear the word at my mouth and warn them from me—warn them to turn from their evil ways—warn them of the consequences, particularly the temporal consequences, of their not reforming—for to these, the general completion of the remainder of the chapter has a most evident and immediate reference.*

Although our text says, speaking in the name of God—*when I bring the sword upon a land*, it would be entertaining the grossest misconception of the Divine Being, to imagine that he delights in War, or that he takes pleasure in the bloody contests which have desolated the earth, and been so destructive of the human species. His character, as drawn by the sacred writers, is the very reverse of this. He delights in the title of the *Universal Father* of the human race, in which every thing the

he is affectionate and tender is comprehended. He is stiled the *God of Love*—the *God of Peace* and the *God of all Consolation*. Nothing, therefore, can be meant, by *his bringing a sword upon a land*, but that he makes the unruly passions, and the vices of men, subservient to his own great purposes, and frequently punishes one nation, by the crimes, of which another is guilty. *The wicked, saith the Psalmist, is a sword of thine.*

The whole of the remaining part of the chapter, from whence our text is taken, is employed in illustrating this great truth, that iniquity is the great source of God's judgments upon a people—that his ways and his conduct in the Government of Mankind, and particularly in the government of nations, are just and equal, and that he inflicts his sore judgments upon them, for their iniquities. In the 24th verse, the Jews, who were then in captivity, pleaded their kindred to Abraham their great ancestor, as an argument why they should inherit the land of their forefathers. But what saith God in answer to their plea? *Ye lift up your eyes toward your idols and shed blood, and shall ye possess the land?*

Ye work abomination and ye defile every man his neighbour's wife, and shall ye possess the land? As I live, saith the Lord God—surely ye shall fall by the sword, and I will lay the land most desolate: then shall they know that I am the Lord when I have laid the land most desolate, because of all their abominations which they have committed.

And are there not but too visible marks that God is, at this awful moment, desolating the earth, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein? Was there ever a period, when the sword had received a more extensive commission, making the mighty to tremble upon their thrones, and the great ones of the earth to run to and fro—having no settled habitation, no place of security, and no means of subsistence but the charity of those, whom once, perhaps, they would have disdained to fet with the dogs of their flocks? How fruitful in calamities and how pregnant with desolations have these last eight years been? And have they not been equally fruitful in crimes? Alas! how easy would it be, without any mixture of exaggeration, to draw a melancholy picture of the atrocities

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cities which have disgraced the national character of some, who are now drinking deep of the cup of vengeance; the most distinguishing feature of which, is the avowedly casting off the fear of God? But however easy it would be, it would be equally painful to me and to my hearers, and equally unnecessary; since there is no man in this country, whose feelings have not been hurt by the recital of them? But what wonder is it that they who have thrown off this most powerful restraint from vice, should have sold themselves to work wickedness with greediness!

But while with the deepest concern we see the open and avowed disregard of every thing that wears the appearance of Religion in one nation—we must not be blind to our own vices. We have not indeed, as a nation thrown off all regard to the Supreme Being—we have not, I trust, displayed a thirst for blood—we are yet distinguished for our humanity, for our charity, and for many other valuable virtues which adorn the human heart. But, though we have not cast off all fear of God, yet may it not be
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very properly doubted whether it has that national influence which it ought to have? Why else the continued traffick, in the human species, so disgraceful to humanity—so injurious to the common and the unalienable rights of mankind, and might it not be added, so hurtful, even in a commercial view? Why those numerous breaches of the conjugal vow, which, instead of decreasing, are alarmingly increasing? And is not infidelity getting stronger and stronger hold of us, and with it a general relaxation of morals? How alarming, in a religious view, is the breach of the sabbath, especially in great and populous towns; and how much does intemperance, profane swearing and other vices abound among us? If we come here this day to lament our defects in these or in any other respects, in which we are conscious we have been faulty—if we determine to break off those vices which do most easily beset us, we do well—we answer the great purpose of this solemnity. But let us guard against imagining, to use the words of an eminent prelate, that the abstinence, the sorrow or the sup-

supplication of a day will avail us. If we come here to say our prayers for mere form sake—if our devotion is put on for the occasion, and put off the moment we leave the place—if we are serious for a few hours once in a year, and as dissipated as ever all the rest of our lives, our prayers themselves will be among the sins for which we ought to beg forgiveness. The prayers to which he listens are those only that spring from a broken and contrite heart. The sorrow that he accepts, is that only which worketh repentance—the abstinence which he requires is abstinence from sin, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well. Every man must own that while he continues a sinful course, he justly deserves to feel the effects of God's anger—he cannot with confidence look up to heaven for pardon or for freedom from punishment. *We know, said the blind man in the Gospel, that God heareth not sinners, that is, such as are determined to continue sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God—if he do his will—him he heareth.*

To apply this in a national view—we are, it must be allowed, a sinful nation—we are suffering great calamities at present—the end of them, we cannot discern—the consequences, we cannot calculate, and God only knows, whether they may not ultimately be ruinous to us ! The only means that are yet in our power to prevent additional evils are, *courage* to defend ourselves, and *repentance* to avert the Divine displeasure.—*Who can tell if God will turn from his fierce anger that we perish not ?*

O then ye sons of benevolence—ye friends of humanity—ye lovers of your country—ye men of every rank and of every description, who have any claim to these genuine characteristics of virtue—be firm—be united in the common cause ! and while you discharge the essential duties of morality and religion—be it your chief care, both by your influence and by, your example, to support the credit of your country, as the surest means, under God, of its preservation*.

* It is painful to observe, that the sincerity of our Governors, in the late unsuccessful negotiation with France, should

should have been called in question, and that there should at this moment be an outcry for obtaining Peace, upon terms that appear to be incompatible with our future security. If the war, in its origin, was just, however desirable Peace may be in itself, there can be no reason, on account of any temporary distresses, to abandon the object we are professedly contending for, but *all powerful Necessity*! But where, it may be asked, does that *necessity* exist? Are our distresses, in any view, comparable to those of France? Are our finances more deranged than theirs? Is our trade, like their's, annihilated? Or will their naval force bear any comparison with our's?

It will perhaps be said, that in contending for the restoration of Belgium to its former owner, we are consulting his particular interest! True—but is not our own interest too, and even our future independance, closely connected with such a claim? Is it not obvious, beyond all contradiction, that by suffering France to retain that extensive and fertile country, Holland would be entirely at their mercy—that we should then be under perpetual alarms of *invasion*, and that, in short, they would soon be able to rival our naval superiority, to which we have hitherto been indebted for our political existence! And can Englishmen have such a prospect presented to them, without feeling every principle of patriotism animating their breasts? While there remains a possibility of preventing so disastrous an increase of territory to an enemy, whose power has astonished the world, and whose ambition is unbounded, surely the name of Peace, upon such terms, will rouse their generous indignation! Besides, would it not be highly to our discredit, to abandon an ally, whose firmness has been proof against all disasters—who has driven the enemy from the heart of his dominions, and who has dissipated the

the alarming apprehension of their over-running all Europe! To be the advocate for war, under such circumstances, will not surely be attributed to a delight in it, but to a principle of self-defence, justifiable by the law of nature, and not forbidden by Christianity!

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